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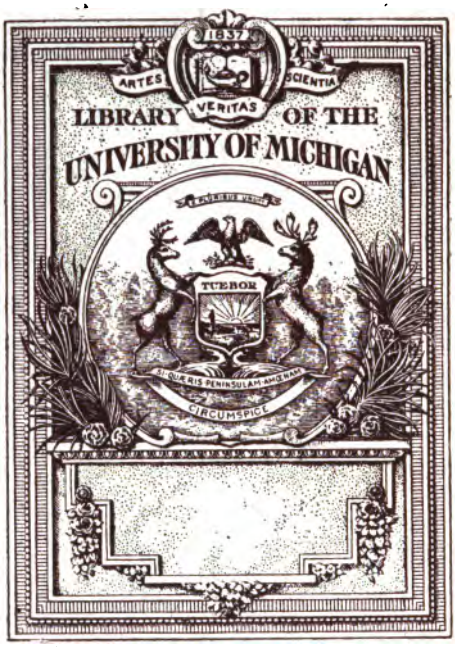
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"CHARLIE" ALEXANDER

Announcement

Charles M. Alexander

A BIOGRAPHY

By Mrs. Alexander

In Collaboration With

J. Kennedy Maclean

Editor of *THE LIFE OF FAITH*, London

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"Charlie" Alexander:

A Study in Personality

By

PHILIP I. ROBERTS

Author of "The Dry Dock of a Thousand Wrecks," "The Three R's of Rescue Mission Work," etc.

"He set our heart-strings strumming."
—JOHN MCNEILL.

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Pocket testament bequeathed thine
Charles M. Alexander
II Timothy 2:15

372673

CHARLES M. ALEXANDER died at "Tennessee," his home in Birmingham, England, October 13, 1920, in the fifty-third year of his age. The news of his unlooked-for decease sent a wave of sorrow right around the globe. Among Christian people, especially those of evangelical predilection, so well known and beloved was he, that it were difficult, if at all possible, to name a single living man whose taking-off would occasion such universal regret, as has been created by that of the world-famous, singing evangelist.

Although he had been unwell some two weeks prior to his decease, Mr. Alexander, on the day of his death, was in his usual health and genial spirits. Indeed, he acted as best man at the marriage of an old friend. He retired to rest as usual, and slept for an hour or so. About one o'clock in the morning, Mrs. Alexander was awakened by sounds of heavy breathing and other indications that her husband was seriously ill. She hurried to his bedside, but before assistance of any kind could be summoned, the spirit of Charles Alexander, released from its earthly tenement, went forth to meet its Lord.

In a tender word of appreciation, printed in a recent issue of *Record of Christian Work*, Mr. Alexander's old friend and associate, Dr. R. A. Torrey, expresses a sentiment that has found, and will continue to find, an echo in thousands of hearts:

"And Charlie has gone from among us! When I read the cablegram . . . I felt such a strange depression, such as I have never felt before. But the sun is still shining—shining brighter than ever. And Charlie is still singing—singing as he never sang on earth!"

Foreword

THIS little volume is not to be regarded as anything approaching an ordered, or a consecutively-arranged, biography of the man of whom it treats. That, doubtless, will be undertaken later, under the direction of Mrs. Alexander. All I have aimed to do, is to pay a plain, personal tribute to one who, in a degree far beyond the ordinary, compelled and retained my affection and regard.

Its very obvious shortcomings may be condoned, possibly, by an appreciation of the fact that it was compiled and placed in the publishers' hands within a few days of the date of the reception in New York of the news of the death of Mr. Alexander, at his home in England.

Half a dozen times during the past four years, Mr. Alexander conferred with me regarding my undertaking the preparation of a chronicle of his life and work—especially as relating to its later period. For one reason and another, the plan was never carried out. Something of the sort is now attempted in the pages following. It is done very imperfectly, but prompted, throughout, by

feelings of the deepest regret and esteem for one who, in a measure attained by few men in any time or day, was truly, " a brother beloved."

P. I. R.

New York, N. Y.

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Bonnie Charlie's now awa'
Safely o'er the friendly main;
He'rts will a'most break in twa,
Should he no' come back again.

Will ye no' come back again?
Will ye no' come back again?
Better lo'ed ye canna be—
Will ye no' come back again?

Sweet's the laverock's note and lang,
Lifting wildly up the glen;
But aye to me he sings ane sang—
Will ye no' come back again?

Will ye no' come back again?
Will ye no' come back again?
Better lo'ed ye canna be—
Will ye no' come back again?

LADY NAIRNE.

I

SONG AND SINGER

ABOUT half a century ago, the modern Gospel song, as distinct from the choicer poetry and statelier measure of the older, time-honoured church hymn, began to occupy a prominent place in the exercise and ritual of evangelical Christian worship, in both the United States and Great Britain.

The institution is distinctively American in origin, and right from the time of its inception and introduction, this country has held foremost place, in point of numbers of composers, and quality of composition. Men of indubitable musical ability turned hand and talent to the writing of Gospel songs, that attained world-wide vogue, and which have been sung wherever the Gospel message has been proclaimed in this, and other lands.

Nearly all of these men have gone to sing a higher, nobler strain. They have their successors, of course. Yet the recalling of their names prompts the reflection that the Gospel hymn writers of to-day can hardly be regarded as the peers

of those of an earlier time. One thinks, for instance, of George F. Root, James McGranahan, W. H. Doane, Robert Lowry, Ira D. Sankey and George Coles Stebbins. Of these, Mr. Stebbins only is left and he (now in his seventy-fifth year), still gives to the world such tuneful, lilting melodies as have been associated with his name.

Among these notable Gospel singers, some attained fame and success as composers, some as soloists, some as choir-leaders. A few of them filled the triple rôle, while others shone in the dual capacity of composer and singer. Conspicuous among the latter stands Ira D. Sankey. It is not easy, if at all possible, at this late date to write anything fresh about the man whose name English-speaking peoples will, in all probability, effectually perpetuate. His songs have engirdled the earth, and under their influence, tens of thousands of men and women have been brought to God. His work (like that of his greater associate, Dwight L. Moody) still follows him, and exerts a positive influence in the religious activities of America and Great Britain, down to the present hour.

Yet great as was Sankey's success in the utilization of the Gospel song, as a means of carrying a message of enheartenment, solace and salvation, it has (although in a different sort of fashion) been quite outdone by the work achieved, during the past quarter of a century, by Charles M. Alexander.

Unlike Sankey, Alexander was not a master of Gospel-song composition. He wrote little, if anything,—at least I have never heard any of it rendered. He had not a good "singing" voice—as a soloist he did not shine. Yet despite these limitations —if, indeed, they can be regarded as limitations in one otherwise so richly dowered with enviable gifts—he succeeded in becoming the most picturesque, the most attractive, the most definitely and uniformly successful, the best-beloved singing evangelist this generation (or possibly any other) has yet known.

More than a quarter of a century ago, I heard James F. Oswald, a parliamentary candidate for Oldham, one of the greatest industrial centres in Great Britain, make the following statement:

"In a constituency of this sort," he declared, "no man possesses a Chinaman's chance to win an election until the people, when speaking of him one to another, get into the way of using an intimate variant of his Christian name."

The accuracy of Oswald's appraisement of the situation was, ultimately, amply vindicated by his winning both the affection of the entire city and the election, while long before the contest was over, everybody in the place was calling him "Jimmie."

It were a simple matter to cite many an instance furnishing supporting evidence of the elemental soundness of James Oswald's psychology. Prac-

tically all of us have noted how, in men whose work has been of a public character, successful achievement and a popular, even affectionate use of their Christian names, have gone together; and that, too, without any unwarranted seeming familiarity being exercised. The simple explanation is, of course, that such men have not only commanded our admiration, but crept into our hearts.

To men of this order, Charles McCallon Alexander unquestionably belonged. In the mind and on the lip of thousands of his fellow-mortals, he was, for more than a quarter of a century, "Charlie" Alexander. Scarcely anybody used his first baptismal name, and fewer still so much as knew his second. He was just "Charlie"; and to men and women, everywhere, his untimely taking-off has come, not merely as the passing of one who in his particular sphere of work had literally no peer, but as of a brother beloved, leaving them "sorrowing, most of all . . . that they should see his face no more."

"At the time Charlie Alexander 'arrived,'" said John McNeill, in the brief, yet beautifully-phrased address he delivered at the prayer-service held in the Presbyterian Building, New York, a day or so after the news of Mr. Alexander's death reached these shores—"at the time Charlie Alexander 'arrived,' some of us thought we knew just all there was to know, concerning the methods best adapted

for catching and holding the attention of large masses of people, brought together for evangelistic purposes. Then Charlie came, and we found we had to begin all over again. He just put the *plus* on everything.

"Over in Britain, yonder, Moody had taught us much—more than we ever thought *anybody* could teach us—and what he taught, abides to this hour. But, by the beginning of the present century, a generation had arisen which knew not Moody. Then Charlie came into our work, and into our hearts. He took the old country literally by storm. Differing in every outward way from Moody, from Sankey, from Torrey, from Chapman—always unique, always himself—he conquered the English and—greater marvel still!—the Scots!

"I recall as though it were yesterday," Mr. McNeill went on, "the trepidation with which I anticipated his coming to Scotland, and the effect some of his methods might be calculated to have on our dour, solid Presbyterians—and if Presbyterians are *not* solid, what *are* they?—only to witness him conquer his vast audiences north of the Tweed, as easily as he had vanquished those in Birmingham, London, Wales and the north of Ireland. And always, mind you, working within the lines and bounds of the Old Evangel—instantaneous, complete salvation through, and by, the crucified and risen Son of God.

"It would have done your eyes good to have

had them watch, as mine did many a time, some solemn, long-faced elder eyeing Charlie as he began to get the folk into the swing of the *Glory Song*—to watch that elder soften, relax, smile and, presently, commence to roar out the chorus as lustily as any laddie in the place. And his wife along with him!"

How sound and accurate this summarizing of Alexander's methods is! How many times those, into whose hands these pages are likely to come, will have seen him do just the very thing the genial Scotsman here describes! He had an unsurpassed genius for exactly this kind of work. He was a musician, more by nature than culture, and had learned the secret of awakening the music which so often lies, silent and latent, in the hearts of an audience. To this gift must be added the simplicity of his own religious beliefs, the contagious glory of his religious fire, the unquestionably magnetic element in his look and voice. All these qualities combined themselves in Charles Alexander's equipment, and effected results such as have not been approximately approached, let alone parallelled, by any other man of his time.

"Charlie" Alexander realized, too, that there is something unspoiled and elementary in men and women, everywhere, no matter what of educational, social or sacerdotal overlay they may adopt or acquire.

"Every audience I ever faced," he told me,

on one occasion, "proved sensitive and amenable to a tone of sympathy, and the touch of friendliness and genuine feeling."

Perhaps the most conclusive proof of the accuracy of this assertion may be found in the fact that, considered in all their aspects, his greatest successes were achieved within the confines of the British Empire—among reserved and, ordinarily, unemotional peoples, possessed, for the most part, by a tangible distaste—almost a dread—of anything savouring of gush or sentimentality.

Yet Alexander appealed to the British in extraordinary fashion. He literally got under their skins, and demonstrated how very human the Britishers are, in spite of their impassive demeanour, and lent additional colour to the ancient saying that "one may find a tender heart even under the mask of a sphinx." I have never been able to eliminate from my memory the scenes I witnessed in the Royal Albert Hall in London—tears rolling down the cheeks of stolid, English business-men, and of wealthy, blasé worldlings as their owners, in spite of themselves, fell under the irresistible spell of this smiling young American, leading his choir in songs which, intrinsically perhaps, bordered on the purely emotional, if not the sentimental, but which in the hands of this accomplished master of assemblies, became a probe which pierced the armour of repression and indifference, which touched the very core of the heart.

"Charlie" Alexander was a typical Southerner. Nobody having once heard his "Bless the Lawd," trumpeted out in that clarion-noted, resonant voice of his, ever afterwards questioned the fact. He was born in Tennessee, on the banks of Cloyd's Creek—not far from the town of Maryville, and within sight of the foot-hills of the Cumberlands. "The sole recreation that seems to have been indulged in by the Cloyd's Creek population was the singing of Gospel hymns, which, as they rang through the valley, made their first but lasting impression upon the mind of a child, destined by God to become the greatest of all song leaders."[1]

"How did you find your place in Christian service, Mr. Alexander?" the evangelist was once asked.

"God just showed it to me, I guess," he answered seriously, "just as He has shown it to many another man. Here is how it came about: When a young fellow in my teens, I was earning my living as a school teacher in North Carolina. One day I unexpectedly received a telegram from my home in Atlanta, announcing the serious illness of my father, from which he was not expected to recover. I hurried home, and during the journey, began to reflect, more seriously than I had ever reflected before, on the seriousness and inevitableness of death.

"My father's death did not occur for more than

[1] "J. Wilbur Chapman: A Biography."

a week after I reached home, and during those seven days my whole outlook on the things which relate to time and eternity underwent a complete change. Among other things, I began to realize something of the value of a human soul. The night on which my father died is the one to which I look back definitely as the date of my conversion. I had to cross the city on foot at a late hour, and as I trudged along, the thought kept recurring again and again to my mind—'Is my father's soul safe in heaven?'

"Of course I knew he had been a professing Christian, an elder in the church, and all that sort of thing. Still the thought would not down—'Is my father safe in heaven?' In the travail of my spirit I turned to God, and as I walked along the streets of Atlanta, I prayed: 'O God, if by token, or vision, or impression there is any way whereby Thou canst vouchsafe assurances to the creatures Thy hands hath made, give me, I pray Thee, to realize the certainty of my father's being safe at home with Thee.' I prayed, as men generally do, when forced into desperate straits—in faith, believing. And the answer came, as clearly and distinctly as any answer *ever* came, to myself or any one else: 'Your father is safe with Me.'

"The load of doubt lifted immediately from my heart. I looked up towards the stars, and right there, under the open sky, pledged myself and life to the service of my Master and Lord. Then and

there, too, there came upon me a yearning desire to lead men to Christ which has never since died out of my heart. At times this desire has burned high —a white hot flame; at others it has burned low—almost smouldered. But never, from that night on the streets of Atlanta, has it ever spluttered out completely. And I pray God it never will.

"The great longing to save souls which came upon me that night led me to begin to look 'round in order to discover how, and by what means, I could best help men and women into the Kingdom. I decided that my work lay along the line of sacred song. I conceived the notion that a Gospel hymn could be converted into a sermon on wheels, as it were; and as time went on, became more and more convinced that by its instrumentality people could be reached and saved."

It has proved to be a great boon to this generation that "Charlie" Alexander not only became convinced of the potentialities of the modern Gospel song, but proceeded to act on his conviction. From Maryville, he went to the Moody Bible Institute, Chicago. Here he remained for nearly four years, preparing himself for his life-work.

During his sojourn in Chicago, the great World's Fair was held in that city, and the young song-leader had his share in the extensive and important work set afoot and accomplished at that time under the leadership of Dwight L. Moody. Among others, he worked with John McNeill, the Scottish

evangelist, who has testified with great tenderness and genuine feeling to the happy associations he shared with "Cha-a-r-r-lie," now nearly thirty years ago.

During the eight years following his leaving the Moody Institute, Mr. Alexander was busily engaged in evangelistic work. He speedily became known as a song-leader and choir-conductor of outstanding ability and originality of method. In a very short time he stood in the front rank of his profession. Somewhere about the year 1902, Mr. Alexander began work in conjunction with Dr. R. A. Torrey. The association proved a particularly happy one, and lasted for more than four years. On more than one occasion, I have heard each man speak in the highest terms of the other.

"I have followed Doc. Torrey around this whole wide world," Mr. Alexander said to me one day in his characteristic way, "and *everywhere* have I run across influences he started and work he accomplished which abide to this hour. You can take it from me, Torrey's work *lasts.*" And of Charles Alexander Dr. Torrey has said: "There is not a single Gospel singer on this continent today, amounting to anything at all, who hasn't modelled his work on the lines first laid down by Charlie Alexander."

During the term of their co-partnership, Torrey and Alexander made a tour of the world. In 1904, they conducted a great Mission in Birming-

ham, England. It was during these meetings that I first saw and heard Mr. Alexander at work. A little later I met, and came to know him personally, working under him and Dr. Torrey as a volunteer, during their great Albert Hall and Brixton meetings, in the English metropolis.

As intimated in my Preface, this little volume is not intended as any sort of a connected or detailed biography of Mr. Alexander. It is not my intention, therefore, to attempt to set down the details of his life and work.

All the world—at least, all the world of English-speaking evangelism—knows that he married Miss Helen Cadbury, a daughter of the well-known English family of that name, in the early part of the century; that owing to her protracted illness, his connection with Dr. Torrey was compulsorily terminated; that, in the early months of 1908, he became associated with Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, and that together they carried out their first great campaign—the Mission in Philadelphia.

Then followed the Australasian tours, their trip to the Orient, their united labours in Canada, Great Britain, and various parts of the United States. For eleven years these two great evangelists worked in unbroken harmony, being the means, under God, of bringing thousands of souls into the fold and family of Jesus Christ. And now, both are gone from us, yet leaving behind them a shin-

ing pathway of accomplishment, of work laboriously undertaken and wonderfully carried through, in, and by, virtue of the Name of the Master they both loved and served so well. Each man had his peculiar gifts; each appealed to his audiences in an entirely different way. The combination, however, was in every way a most remarkable one. Working without the other, each appeared to lack something; together, they simply worked wonders in the sphere of evangelistic activity, carrying everywhere they laboured an overpowering sense of the potency of a Gospel message, faithfully delivered in the spirit of the truth "once delivered to the saints."

II

A MASTER OF ASSEMBLIES

THE descriptive articles which constitute this chapter were written of Mr. Alexander during his Australian tours. They appeared, originally, in a *Chapman-Alexander Souvenir,* compiled under the direction of T. Shaw Fitchett, editor of *The Southern Cross.*

They are very skilfully done, and present a truthful and easily-recognizable picture of how this truly wonderful Gospel-song leader did his work. Change the names of the cities and you have a verbal vizualization of how Alexander went about his work in London, or Chicago, or Birmingham, or Philadelphia—or anywhere:

Climb up by stairway and ladder to the top of the organ and look down. You see a solitary frock-coated figure, standing on a little red island, in the midst of a sea of faces. To his left and right are grand pianos, and between them a cabinet organ.

The figure on the red island has apparently done something, for the sea all around him breaks up into waves, that surge up till they reach his feet. A few silver notes float up from the pianos. They are faint but unmistakable—they are the preliminary bars of *The Glory Song,* and a perceptible thrill of recognition trembles through the great throng.

When all my labours and troubles are o'er
sing the choir:

And I am safe on the beautiful shore
adds the right gallery:

Just to be near the dear Lord I adore
chimes in the left gallery:

Will through the ages be glory for me
shout the people on the floor.

Then the man on the island—who has been responsible for these bursts of song—goes off into a series of Indian-club exercises, and his single word, "Eve'body," is chased by such a volume of harmony that the very roof rings with the shout

That will be glory—be glory for me!

The music stops, and beginning at the little island, the wave subsides. Its crest runs back, and back, and back, under the dome, past the Duke's dais, till it reaches the barricade—one half expects a splash of people to be thrown up over the great screens which form the barrier!

Then there arises a mighty, humming melody. The words are indistinguishable, but the air is one that every one knows. A choir of seven thousand is singing, just above their breath, *Nearer my God to Thee,* and away among the rafters the effect is even greater than when *The Glory Song* shook the building.

Another pause and then *There is Power in the Blood* is declared by seven thousand swelling, triumphant voices.

This conductor is used to doing things on a big scale, and here is a mighty musical instrument worthy the touch of a master hand. Seven thousand separate notes, a dozen stops, power supplied, not by hydraulic machinery, but by willing hands and warm blood. And that slender man with the silver voice, the ready wit, the charming smile, knows how to use his instrument. He draws out its full value, and who shall say how much of the work of winning souls is done before ever the Word is read or the text announced? At any rate, the ground is most wonderfully prepared to receive the seed.

As St. Andrew's clock chimed eight, a figure in a top coat appeared in the aisle, and there being no other top coat like it in all Australia, the waiting choir burst into a cheer of welcome.

"A-amen!" responded the figure in the overcoat, and there being no other "A-men" like it

in all Australia, there was another round of applause.

And it was a sight to evoke an "Amen"! Eleven hundred, say the official figures, is the estimated capacity of the choir gallery, but one might safely add at least one hundred to the estimate. They represented the picked singers from perhaps two hundred different churches.

Mr. Alexander cast aside the famous overcoat and ran up the red carpeted flight of steps to the conductor's stand, raised some twelve or fourteen feet above the level of the platform. A line ruled from the foot of his staircase to the seat of the big organ would divide the one hundred and twenty-five tenors and five hundred sopranos from, say, two hundred and fifty basses and three hundred altos.

He got into touch with them at once. "You have come from a great many churches," he said, "but with a single purpose, I know," and then, as by a happy inspiration, "What do you say, shall we sing *'The Church's one Foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord'?*"

They sang it, and "I like you!" announced the leader emphatically, and immediately called for another old favourite, *For all the Saints who from Their Labours Rest.* Here was a chance for the tenors to show their mettle, and as they swept up the crescendo in the first four bars Mr. Alexander's eyes kindled, and he nodded approval, for his choir

organizer had promised him a tenor-strength that would probably surpass anything he had known in either England or America.

"Now I want you to sing a Gospel song written by one of yourselves, an Australian born and bred. Play *He Will Hold Me Fast,* Mr. Harkness."

Mr. Harkness played the air through the applause.

"Now listen! I want you to sing as I *want* you to sing. Did you get that? And remember, I'm depending on you, and if you don't stay by me, I'm gone! Two things you've got to do. Sing as I tell you, and sing as if you were preaching, not singing. That's what we're here for. We've got to preach!"

Then began the music lesson. Mr. Naftzger mounted the steps and stood beside the conductor.

"I want you to watch how Mr. Naftzger sings, and follow him closely. You know that when a man writes a song he cannot put on paper everything he would like to—he just writes it straight ahead and leaves it to your common sense to know how to sing it. So SING IT RIGHT, if you knock the music all to pieces. Now it is the easiest thing in the world to kill a Gospel song. Listen ——" and Mr. Alexander sang the music exactly as written. "When-I—fear-my—faith-would—fa-ail—He-will — hold-me — fast — tum-tum — tum-tum ——" When the laughter showed that his hearers took the point, he stopped. "Now don't

you see?" he asked, quickly. "Sing it like that, and there's nothing *to* it; but get it right, and there's a sermon in it!"

Then Mr. Naftzger sang the first verse, and Mr. Alexander, with a hand on his shoulder, flung in a comment at the end of every line. The result was something like this:

"When I fear my faith will fail,"
("Catch that phrasing?")
"CHRIST can hold me fast;"
("Just like that.")
"When the tempter would prevail,"
("Do you see?")
"He can HOLD ME fast."
("Now the chorus!")

"SING IT!" It was a trumpet call, and it thrilled the ranks. "Come on! Come on!" and a vigorous foot stamped the time on the floor of the stand. . . . "That chorus once more, just a little faster, and when you come to the last 'hold,' just sing it as if you meant it. Sing it in capitals. Tell the people that Christ can HOLD them." As the chorus pealed out crisp and clear in spite of its pace and volume, Mr. Alexander's face, at first rigidly set as if he were pulling the whole twelve hundred, relaxed into one beaming smile. "Bless your old hearts," he exclaimed. "Let's stay here for a week!"

The music lesson proceeded, and we made our way—a little cluster of us—to the top of the organ

loft, from which coign of vantage we could not only hear the singing, but watch the conductor. Above the choir seats half a dozen arc lights shed their electric brilliance, but in the hall below a single incandescent burned like a star. As far as the eye could reach were empty chairs, row after row, stretching away to the dome, and then lost in the cavern of darkness beyond. Against that blackness Mr. Alexander stood up in bold relief, the whiteness of his face and hands accentuated by the dazzling lights, every expression of his features as readable as every word he spoke was audible.

And as we watched, we realized the difference between a choir conductor and a choir-maker. We recognized, too, a greater Alexander than of yore —greater in skill, in knowledge of human nature, and in spiritual force. He talked to that company of singers—strangers most of them not only to him, but to each other—as if they were members of a family, and handled them with an absolute confidence born of the experience gained in the seven years since he first stood—a comparatively unknown leader—before an audience in the Melbourne Exhibition Building.

His knowledge of human nature was exemplified in an incident that perhaps marked the climax to the rehearsal. It was a new song called *The Way of the Cross Leads Home,* and Mr. Naftzger had sung the first verse:

I must needs go home by the way of the Cross,
There's no other way but this;
I shall ne'er get sight of the Gates of Light,
If the way of the Cross I miss.

"Now," said Mr. Alexander, "I will give a Bible to any lady who will sing that verse," and instantly a young woman with a blue hat, sitting high up among the sopranos, stood up and sang the verse in a full, clear voice, and with such spirit that a burst of applause followed and an encore was demanded.

"Say! if any other lady will sing the second verse, I guess my wife will give her a Bible, too." Mrs. Alexander nodded her guarantee, but for a moment there was no volunteer. Then a young lady in a brown tailor-made costume faced the ordeal, and in a sweet voice that trembled just a little from nervousness, sang:

I have lost my load at the foot of the Cross,
As here on my Lord I gaze;
With a lightened heart, on the road I start,
And my heart has been filled with praise.

Again there was hearty appreciation from the choir and a general preparation for the united singing of the rest of the hymn.

But Mr. Alexander had not done with his soloists. "You ladies sang beautifully and bravely, but I want you to do one thing more for me. Just come right down here and sing the last verse together. Won't you?" And amidst the laughter

and encouraging "bravos" of their sympathetic fellow-members, the blue and the brown made their way down and faced the delighted audience. They raised their books, but "One moment!" interrupted the conductor. "Did you ladies ever sing together before—No? Know each other—No? Well, shake hands now and become acquainted." So, whilst the gallery rang with merriment, the heroines shook hands, and then, shoulder to shoulder, sang:

Then I bid farewell to the way of the world,
To walk in it nevermore;
For my Lord says "Come!" and I seek my home
Where He waits at the open door.

It was an amusing interlude, an interesting little bit of entertainment; but somehow, when the blue and the brown had settled into their places again, there was a different feeling in the air. It was as if the whole gathering had shaken hands—had come to a family party.

Mr. Alexander treated them as a family, too. "What are you doing?" he scolded, stopping in the midst of a chorus. "Listen, sopranos! Throw yourselves right into it. Don't stay 'way back. Now, try again. . . .

"No! No! NO! Say your words out, every one clear-cut like a diamond." And they answered to the spur as they had responded to the smile!

It was during the singing of Geibel's setting of

Jesus, Lover of My Soul that Mr. Alexander displayed another of those little characteristics that have made him a master. Tenors and altos sing the air, and the successful effect depends largely upon the manner in which the other parts pick up the chorus. The average conductor would probably say, "Now, ladies, be careful of your attack!" Mr. Alexander's method is different. He detected a flaw in the connection, an almost imperceptible break between the verse and the chorus. "Stop!" he shouted. Then, quietly, "Listen, sopranos, and I'll tell you what to do. Just watch those tenors coming down to the end of the line, take in your breath a good minute before they arrive, and when the note comes GRAB IT!" The advice may not have been couched in the exact terms of the Royal College of Music, but it was effective.

Space allows for but a word about the finest chorus of the evening, and the bare mention of the fact that in the course of the lesson Mrs. Norton, Mrs. Asher, Mr. Hemminger, and Mr. Dickson were used as soloists to illustrate the methods of phrasing and expression. The chorus referred to was prefaced—like most of the numbers, indeed—with a little story. "After our great meetings in the Albert Hall, London, I asked one of the Anglican clergymen what he remembered more than anything else, and he replied, 'The way the people sang *Thy God Reigneth!*' And isn't that a good

message to carry in your hearts and to burn into the minds of the people who will come?"

The number is arranged in four-line stanzas, in a peculiarly effective manner, and ending in two long notes (Thy God), and two short ones (reigneth), sung with tremendous power, and cut off with startling abruptness. Standing under the dome, we heard every word of the anthem clearly. The victorious shout crashed through the building, ended sharply, and from the dark recesses came back the echo with striking distinctness, "*God reigneth.*"

Mr. Alexander showed originality, too, in his retirement. "Sing that chorus—*Up from the Grave He Arose*—again while I stand back in the hall," he remarked—but as he went he adroitly gathered up his overcoat and hat. "Once more, please." Then from the dome, "Thank you all. Good-bye. God bless you"—and he was gone!

To the choir members it was an inspiration and a fine evening's entertainment, to the conductor—and, it must be added, to the pianist, Mr. Harkness—it was a night of tremendous physical effort and nervous strain; but to the detached and interested onlooker the whole performance was a masterpiece, an artistic triumph.

The great concert-hall is still in semi-darkness. A few lights, here and there, relieve the gloom. Away out beyond the dome is blackness, thick as

night. The choir-gallery and the space immediately in front is faintly lit up. But this condition of things continues only for a few minutes. As if by a touch of some unseen magician, the vast building is filled with white, soft light.

Ah, what is that? The doors are open! The crowd is coming! Yes, the crowd *is* coming. It is like an immense moving-picture, exhibited to the accompaniment of accompanying thunder. Thousands upon thousands are hurrying up through the murky, dust-filled atmosphere, as if their very lives depended on their speed. On they come—like the tidal bore of a great tidal river. In one vast volume it rushes till it reaches the space beneath the dome. The main stream continues and surges up the central aisle, and distributes itself over all the concert-hall area. Two side-streams have disappeared; but they burst up from the stairways like waves from underneath hollow rocks and splash and gurgle along the galleries.

At five minutes past seven an official reports: "All the seats are filled." Orders are given for the doors to be closed. But what a throng it is! For twenty minutes it tries to go through the process of "settling down." It doesn't succeed very well. The air is full of social joy. Right here in the front is wheeled an invalid chair, with a pale-faced woman seated in it. One wonders by what amount of loving forethought and ingenious contriving this has been managed? The choir enter-

tains itself by applauding prominent members as they arrive. But at twenty-five minutes past seven not the choir only, but also the whole vast audience is cheering at its fullest power. Alexander has come!

His first words ring out clear and strong: "We are to have a three-hour sing," and he smiles gleefully at thought of such a program. His second sentence conveys a request. It is done with exquisite tact. Its result is almost instantly apparent in the spectacle furnished by practically every lady tugging at dagger-like pins and removing her hat, patting down her front hair or giving it sundry little pokes and pulls to straighten it into a state of becomingness. Some look far from satisfied, but the changed appearance of the vast audience is very marked. What was a moment before an uneven surface, broken by headgear of various heights and shapes and colours, behind which unfortunate males have sat dodging, is now almost a level and unhindered. And the men, with one accord, "look" a thousand votes of thanks.

Alexander is watching—amused and delighted. He is measuring his crowd with the eye of a general. He is determining his methods. "Get ready," he cries, "for a long, hard, delightful evening. We are *all* going to join the choir." His hands are uplifted—those wonder-working hands. "Let us pray first." And he prays briefly and simply.

"One hundred and forty—*Abide With Me.* Everybody stand." The three hours of singing have begun. The conductor is leaning forward, scanning every part of this great company. "The last phrase just in a whisper." The direction is obeyed. Ten thousand voices are blending in one great, whispered prayer—"Abide with me." Then enthusiasts begin to call out the numbers of hymns they want sung.

"Wait a minute," cries Mr. Alexander. "I'll tell you when you can have your choice. First of all we're going to learn a new chorus while we're fresh. It is number fifty-nine. There's enough in this to save any man, no matter how deep he may be sunk in sin."

The sopranos of the choir sing it first. Then the whole choir. The audience listens. Heads are gently swaying and nodding as the melody becomes more familiar:

I believe, I believe on the Son of God.

The conductor is insisting on clear enunciation: "Not I-'lieve. Let the words come clear out. I *be*-lieve." Turning swiftly to the audience he cries: "Now! Are you ready for it?" The audience isn't sure. A few voices answer timidly in the affirmative. Mr. Alexander won't try it yet. He has another plan. Pointing to one of the officials he asks: "Do you think there is enough in that chorus to save a man?" "Yes, I do," an-

swers the official promptly. "Then you give a Bible to the first volunteer who will sing it," flashes back the song-leader. A ripple of merriment runs over all faces, not excluding that of the official. Two ladies volunteer to make the effort! The first is very nervous, and her voice thins off in parts—almost to silence. The second sings clearly and well. Both are to get Bibles. Then everybody goes to work—"I believe, I believe on the Son of God." "Glory—glory," cries a Salvation Army officer, his eyes glistening like the very stars.

And now the eyes of the conductor are upon the lady in the wheel-chair. "And what hymn would *you* like?" he asks sympathetically. She chooses *There is Power in the Blood.* "Ah, we used to make this old building ring with that, seven years ago," says Mr. Alexander. "Choir, sing the chorus:

"There is power, power, wonder-working power.

"Now," smilingly, "you common people." The word "power—power," vibrates and echoes. "Do you want another verse?" and the invalid smiles back her acquiescent wish. The verse is sung. "You've got them to sing better than I did," Alexander says to her, accompanying his words with his winning smile. How many future hours, think you, will be cheered for that woman by the memory of this precious hour?

Now the Chairman of the Executive Committee

—Dr. A. Stewart—is asked to select a hymn. In broad Scotch tones he cries: *Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing.* "Why," exclaims Mr. Alexander, "this Presbyterian has chosen one of the oldest and greatest Methodist pieces ever written. Everybody over fifty-five stand up and sing it." The seniors sing it. Their voices are rather wavering and uncertain. The conductor greets them with a "Hallelujah" midway, and a louder at the end.

"And how long is it since *you* first heard that hymn?" says Mr. Alexander to a white-haired old man. "Nearly seventy years ago," is the reply. "Bless your old hearts," smiles the conductor to the veterans. "That's the best singing we have had to-night. Don't stop singing till you get into your graves. And then you will begin all over again."

Mr. Alexander announces the offering, and while it is being received, reads a letter to the choir. It tells of how two young ladies were led to surrender themselves to Christ through the singing at the first choir rehearsal. Number "one-thirty-one" had influenced them.

"Sing it—*My Anchor Holds.*" In his eagerness to encourage and inspire his singers, this wonderfully magnetic conductor races down several steps of his high platform, and literally pelts directions with both his hands at various sections of the choir. They respond magnificently. Their leader

stands with his right hand extended while the last note is sustained. Then it falls with the swiftness of a sword-stroke and the sound is cut off. There is a moment of breathless quiet, followed by a veritable thunder-roll of applause.

While the choir rests, the audience sings *Lean Upon His Arms,* and just as Mr. Alexander is urging the preachers and the local preachers to sing it—this with a quaint, amusing expression—Dr. Chapman, *the* preacher, arrives. He is not to preach to-night, however. Presently he reads a number of requests for prayer, and submits them to God. It is a hushed assembly now, kneeling at the throne of the Eternal.

After these moments of supplication, Mr. Alexander asks his vast audience whether any hymn sung during the Mission was known to have been the means of saving any one? "Yes," cries a voice, "number seventy-nine—*He Will Hold Me Fast.*" The conductor pledges Dr. Chapman to give a Bible to a man who sings one of the verses as a solo. Dr. Chapman smiles, and nods assent.

Now a look of delighted anticipation lights up all faces as it is announced that Mr. Naftzger will sing *The Ninety and Nine.* The clear, cultured voice rings out to the outer rim of the multitude. With each stanza the feeling grows. The last line rings out as with a heavenly note of triumph in it:

Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own.

The choir takes up and repeats the great, glad

word, "Rejoice," again and yet again. Then the whole line

Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own.

The right-hand gallery takes up the strain. Then the left-hand. Then the people far off, under the dome. Then the yet more distant and almost invisible people in the galleries beyond. Finally, everybody stands and sings

Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own.

Up, up, and away the thankful strain rises, and though challenging the rejoicing in the very upper courts of God, when the angels sing the saving triumphs of the Lord, who seeks, and seeking, saves.

It is no haphazard that the next hymn is *Must I Go and Empty Handed?* This incomparable song-leader has a genius for appropriateness. He feels the moods of an audience and divines their thoughts. We have been singing of the great rejoicing of the home-bringing of the Shepherd's far-wandered ones. We are now brought searchingly to consider our own responsibility in His service. "If you were to die where you are sitting, would you go out of this earthly life to face your Lord—and empty-handed?" Alexander has compressed a whole sermon into a sentence—a question—and it pierces the hearts of men.

In front of the organ is a broad strip of white cloth, bearing in letters large enough for ten thousand people to read the words: "God is now will-

ing. Are you?" It is part of the background of the next song. The other part is a bit of spoken history. "This song," Mr. Alexander is saying, "was sung every night in the great Bingley Hall, Birmingham, away yonder in your Mother Land, and Mr. Hemminger will now sing it here—for you."

Will you not trust Him, faithful and true?
If you refuse Him, O what will you do?
God is now willing—are you?

And Hemminger sings it so that it becomes a poignant entreaty, pulsing with the very love of God.

During the singing of the next hymn it would seem as though the vast spaces above us were peopled with our own dear dead—an invisible company, near at hand and watching—"Looking this way." Hard-faced men are weeping quietly, women are sobbing audibly. For the touch of sorrow has been laid upon us all. We have all stood, bereft and desolate, in the awful silences of bereavement. Yet grief has its classifications, so to speak. And those who have "fathers and mothers safe in the vale," sing of them; those who have "brothers and sisters gone to that clime," sing of *them;* those who have "a sweet, little darling light of the home, looking for some one, beckoning, 'Come,'" sing of *them.* Voices quaver, others fail. It is all pathetic, beyond description. Then softly, yet

with gradually strengthening volume and unannounced is sung by the choir

There is a happy land far, far away,

which breaks upon this great gathering like a note of blissful assurance wafted from the land across whose blissful portals the Angel of Death hath never trod, where happy spirits ever quiver, with the melody of peace.

It is now ten o'clock. But the audience is still as keen in its interest as it was at eight. The conductor disciplines his choir to perfection in its rendering of

Who Could It Be But Jesus?

One more solo, and we are told the "choir practice" will end:

I love Him, I love Him,
Because He first loved me.

The choir hums the chorus, as one voice clear, heart-warm, exultant, appealing rises above the moving music. It ceases, and there is a great stillness. We bow in prayer. People are asked to make a decision for Christ, for this is an evangelistic service. Many stand. And then that voice, rich and full, pleads and gives thanks to God. Even now, the evening's program is not quite complete. We sing, as those who know that, never again, on this earth, shall all meet just in this way,

God be with you till we meet again.

It is a mutual prayer, a common pledge, and the Benediction is as the confirming voice of God. The wondrous night of song is ended—and yet, it will *never* end!

Who, reading these pieces of fine, descriptive writing, can fail to recognize their truthfulness? How they conjure up one's own memories of this veritable master of assemblies! Alexander's methods of work in Australia were his methods everywhere. He was never a copyist—except of himself—always original, spontaneous, unique.

It is difficult to estimate—impossible, maybe, to overestimate — "Charlie" Alexander's contribution to the success of the great Missions in which he collaborated. Dr. Chapman, himself, freely acknowledged that Alexander's was a much more difficult task than was his own, and made his own work comparatively easy. To take an audience of anything from five to ten thousand men and women; to gather, as it were, their individual, disconnected strands of thought and weld them into a single wire along which a single message is dispatched—to do that is the work of consecrated genius. And "Charlie" Alexander did it—as no other living man I ever saw *could* do it. And the direct outcome of his doing it was to aid men and women in catching a glimpse of the Invisible, and to make it impossible for them, thereafter, to forget the high, imperative concerns of the soul.

III

HYMNS THAT HAVE HELPED

IT goes without saying that a song-ministry such as that of Charles Alexander—a ministry which has literally belted the globe—was followed by remarkable results. I have not now in mind the general effect of such a ministry, its tonic effect on believers, its indispensable place in the great Missions conducted East and West by his colleagues. What I have in mind is the *individual* blessing Alexander, his soloists and his hymns have brought to needy, stricken men and women everywhere. I have heard the great song-leader relate scores of such instances in public in addition to many others he told me of from time to time in the course of personal conversations.

"Your songs have been a source of real benediction to your fellow-mortals?" Mr. Alexander was once asked.

"Well, I just guess they have," he replied. "Why, I could begin with the old *Glory Song,* and go clean through, telling you of people in almost every land under the sun that have been brought to Christ by one and another. You see, if you

have songs written with experiences like that back of them, they can't help being soul-winners. And that is the great test a song has got to pass before we let it in—is it a soul-winner? We've got no use for pretty songs, or grand songs, or entertaining songs, unless they come up to that standard. There are other essentials."

"Which are ——?"

"Well, some of them are simplicity, smoothness, directness, truth to Scripture. Talking of simplicity, people sometimes say to me, 'Why, with a choir like that, you could render such and such an oratorio magnificently!' or 'Why don't you give us something classical, something high-class?' Well, I don't know about high-class. I judge a song by its saving power, and I reckon I use the highest possible class. When you can show me that oratorios will convert more people than simple Gospel songs, I will put them on the program every night of the week. But I believe in using the hymns that really help people, and save people, and when they don't do that, it is best not to waste time on them. Yes, that is the test."

"Where do you get your hymns?"

"From the wide world. Here, there and everywhere. From all sorts of people and all kinds of places. The man who sets out to make a collection of Gospel songs never knows when he may find a treasure. I could tell you stories enough to fill columns about the origins of some of the songs

that have been sung in this Mission. I received through the mail the music of *What Will You Do With Jesus?* and it has become our great invitation song. Then I shall never forget how *Don't Stop Praying* had its birth. I also received it through the post; the sender told me that it had been refused by two music publishers. I was so struck with it that I asked the writer to call and see me. She came, and told me that she had had a very great trouble. She prayed for help, but help did not seem to be coming. Still she kept praying, and one morning, at breakfast, she opened a letter that lifted the whole trouble from her. She was so convinced that her faith had been justified, and so inspired by the belief, that before she got up from the table she wrote the words and music of *Don't Stop Praying* almost exactly as they stand to-day.

"Of course, some people write the words of one hymn as the result of a deep heart experience, and never write another—just as a writer might write one book that grips and holds you, yet can never write another like it. But when you come to think of it, a Gospel song-book is just a wonderful thing. For in one you have say a hundred things that have not only gripped hundreds of souls, but brought scores of them right into the Kingdom.

"Take, for instance, *He Will Hold Me Fast,*" Mr. Alexander went on. "Harkness wrote that hymn, through him once being himself held and influenced by a single phrase in a sermon. It imme-

diately became popular, especially with male audiences. When we were in Swansea, the famous coaling port of South Wales, the men caught it up and sang it as only Welshmen can sing. One day a big fellow was working on the pier, helping to load a vessel. By some means one of his heels became caught in the chain of the crane, and before he realized what had happened he was swinging, head down, in mid-air. The great steam crane carried him up thirty or forty feet in a few seconds, but his predicament was seen, and the engine-driver, being notified, he was safely lowered. He told me, afterwards, that he had been attending the meetings of the Mission, and that while he hung in mid-air the line of that hymn flashed into his mind and he felt 'He will hold me fast.' I'm not at all surprised that this has been his favourite hymn ever since.

"During a Mission I assisted in conducting in Liverpool, a sporting man who, among other things incidental to such a life as was his, had been a prize-fight referee. He had a God-fearing wife, who, all unknown to him, had for six years prayed unceasingly for his conversion.

"One day he consented to accompany his wife to one of our meetings. When the pair got to the building where the Mission was being held, they found it packed to the doors, and a great crowd waiting outside.

"Turning to his wife the man said: 'Do you

think I'm going to shove my way through *that* crew?'

"'But you've promised me,' replied his wife.

"'Well, all right. Let's see what we can do. If it had been a mob trying to get into a prize-fight, I'd soon show 'em how to get through.'

"They managed to get into the building. Nothing seemed to impress the man until the great crowd began to sing that wonderful hymn *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.* As the third stanza was being sung—

"See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet—
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

the rough, strong man bowed his head in his hands and cried like a little child. It was the vision of Jesus, suffering for his sins, that had conquered his heart. He went to the front, and said to the man who dealt with him: 'Sir, do you know I have learned and realized more of the story of Jesus in the last five minutes than in the past fifteen years.'

"That man," said Mr. Alexander, "afterwards became one of the most enthusiastic Christian workers in Liverpool, and has remained such to this day.

"Everybody knows how popular *He Lifted Me* became, and what a real help it has proved to thou-

sands. That song was written for me by Charles H. Gabriel, the author of the *Glory Song,* and I consider it one of the best he ever *has* written. Wherever it is used I receive letters from people telling me of the great benefit they have derived from this song. While in Boston, Mass., I received a letter from a man who was brought to Christ by this song. He told me he had not been in church for sixteen years, and had grown indifferent to religion. On reading this song over he was stirred profoundly, and immediately settled the question then and there. He wrote that he had applied the song to his own life, and that Christ had indeed lifted him from sin and wretchedness into a life of peace and joy in Him.

"A striking instance of the soul-saving power of Gospel song occurred in the case of a lady who attended one of the simultaneous meetings during the great Chicago Mission. During the service a verse in the hymn *Will You Take Jesus To-Day?* arrested her attention. The music sank deep into her soul, and she found herself compelled to answer the question definitely. A minute's thought decided the issue, and with a heart full of joy unspeakable she gave her life to God. On leaving the building she purchased a hymn-book, and that evening, in company with her husband and seventeen-year-old daughter, she sat up until midnight singing the Gospel songs. The result of her example was that both husband and daughter ac-

cepted the Saviour, and they retired to rest a family united in Christ.

"The following day the lady was taken suddenly and seriously ill. On the way to the hospital she said to her husband: 'I shall never come back home again; but oh, I am glad I answered the question and got right with God. I am not afraid to go.' She died without returning to her home as she had prophesied, but before passing away she requested that at the funeral service they would sing the hymn *Will You Take Jesus To-Day?* which had been the means of opening up for her the way to eternal life.

"One day while I was working in South London," Mr. Alexander continued, "a woman went to one of our afternoon meetings and was much impressed by the singing of the hymn *Does Jesus Care?* Returning home that evening she found that her only son had not returned. She sat up all night watching for his appearance—yet comforted by the words of the hymn she had heard. After much surprise and anguish of mind she learned that he had been arrested, and was waiting trial the following week. All through the days of agony that followed—hardly conscious of what was passing around her—that hymn was with her. With other believing friends she was able to commit the matter to the Lord, who indeed overruled, and, contrary to expectations, the boy was released. The same afternoon he came straight to the hall

where we were holding meetings and yielded himself to the God who had done so much for him, and since that time both mother and son have been praising and serving God.

"When we were holding a Mission in a town in the State of Iowa, one of the big officials of a great American railroad used to come into our meetings. He could not get in for the regular services, but he would always come in for the after-meetings, and he very much enjoyed them, except when we began to sing *I Surrender All.* Then he would get up and leave the building. I asked him if he did not like the song?

"'I like it well enough,' he replied, 'but when I hear it I have to go out.'

"'Yes, I have noticed that,' I replied, 'but why?'

"'Well,' he returned, 'if I stayed in this place and listened that song through, I would have to go right up, surrender all, and give my heart to God. And I'm not willing to do it. So I just clear out.'

"I tell you," said Mr. Alexander, "a song that can grip a man in that fashion will do good anywhere:

"I surrender all,
I surrender all;
All I have, I bring to Jesus—
I surrender all.

"When we were in the Orient in 1909, I introduced the chorus of this song at a meeting that was

crowded with Japanese. I had never before sung this chorus in a foreign language. A man translated it for me, and romanized it, and while one of our party was speaking I memorized the translation, and then got up and sang it. I told the people that this 'Full Surrender' would open the door for all the blessings of Christianity. During the singing of the chorus a big blacksmith was converted. He came right down from the gallery where he was sitting, and asked if he could say something to the people. He said that twelve years ago he had torn in two a Testament that a missionary gave him. He would have nothing to do with Christianity. When he heard that we had arrived he came down to the meetings, and was much impressed with what was said about Jesus Christ and His power to save and keep a wicked man. He said that when he heard the song *I Surrender All* he saw that that would settle all his difficulties, and he decided there and then to accept Christ.

"While he was telling this story the people were intensely interested. They sat silent, and as he proceeded the tears came into their eyes. He spoke as earnestly as if he had been talking on some vital political question. He said: 'I used to beat my wife. I used to come home drunk, but now I am going home to stop drinking and to lead my wife to Jesus Christ.' When I got to the station he was there with a present for me. I have

heard from him since. He has joined the Christian Church, has family prayers in his home, and is leading a consistent God-fearing life.

"*It Is Heaven* is a hymn that helps. First, it helps people to find the Saviour. During the Melbourne Mission a minister wrote to tell me that at a meeting held in his district three men were led to Jesus Christ through the singing of this hymn. At one of our meetings a girl rose and sang a verse of *It Is Heaven.* I asked her how long she had been a Christian, and she said it was since the previous evening, when this hymn led her to Christ. Already several people have told me that this hymn has been the means of their conversion. Second, it helps people in their work. A Melbourne employer allowed his employees an extra hour for lunch in order that they might attend the noon meeting. I afterwards received a letter from him in which he said: 'Since the day that my employees attended the midday meeting, at which they and I got such an uplift, the workroom is a place of melody. They sing *It Is Heaven,* and it *is* heaven to hear them sing. They get through more work, too.'

"Third, it helps people to live right. In one of the Melbourne suburbs a woman came into a butcher's shop one morning with a very happy expression on her face. The proprietor of the shop, who had been a prominent worker in our Mission, was surprised to see her smiling, because she had

always been very sad and melancholy. He asked what was the reason for the change. 'My husband was converted the other night,' she said. 'He used to ill-treat me before, and our home was miserable. But now it is quite different. We both go about the house singing *It Is Heaven,* and the whole place seems brighter.' This hymn has helped others. It can help you.

"*You Must Do Something To-night* is plainly an invitation hymn. It invites you to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour. It asks a question which must be answered by each one of us. The question has only two answers—will you reject, or will you accept? If you do not accept Him, then you are rejecting Him. There is no neutral ground.

"It was written by Mr. Harkness in Philadelphia one evening, while Dr. Chapman was preaching. The words were suggested by the different points in Dr. Chapman's sermon on that occasion. He was preaching along the lines of decision for Christ, and among other things he said: 'You must be for or against Christ; confess or deny Him; accept or reject Him.' In order to give the hymn finality Mr. Harkness wrote the last verse, *With God There is no To-morrow,* of his own initiative. The music came in the same way as the words, and the song has been used with marked success in the United States, England, Canada, and Australia.

"One day when we were holding our great Mission in Sydney, a man approached one of the local workers and, speaking of our midday meetings, said, 'Do they hold these meetings every day?' Being answered in the affirmative, the man went on, 'I knew nothing about these people. But yesterday I was sitting in Wynyard Square reading one of the daily papers, when my eyes caught these words—

"'*Lonely and sad, from friends apart,*
God will take care of you.
He will give peace to your aching heart.
God will take care of you.

I have been a lonely and a sad man. I have a wife and a boy in the country, but drink has been my ruin. For some time I have had neither food nor shelter. I have been sleeping out, and my heart has just been full of misery. But as soon as my eyes caught those words, and I saw where they had been sung, I came at once to the midday service in the Town Hall. There I gave my heart to God, and with His help I will be a new man. For some time I have had nothing to do, but if God will give me a chance I will get employment, and will work hard until I can get a home for my wife and boy, and become a good, respectable citizen. With God's help I intend to live the life of a Christian.'"

During the Melbourne Mission Mr. Alexander received a letter from a gentleman relating the following remarkable story:

"I was on my way to the city by train to attend the midday meeting. The carriage was well filled. Sitting next to me was a neatly-dressed man of about thirty. To fill in time I took my hymn-book out of my pocket, and commenced turning over the pages and reading the different hymns. After glancing at number thirty-nine, *It Is Heaven,* my attention was attracted to the next one by the personal note in it, and I read it through carefully, at the same time trying to pick up the tune. At the next station the other passengers alighted, and my fellow-traveller and I were left sitting close together. I had no idea that he had been glancing at the hymn-book until, leaning over towards me, he tapped his finger almost impatiently on the sheet with the hymn *O Friend Without Jesus,* and said, 'Excuse me, but do you believe that?' I said quietly, 'Yes, of course I do.' 'Well,' he said, 'I don't. And if you had had the experiences I have had, you might drop it too.'

"I hardly knew what to say, but finally I replied, 'Well, my friend, you have evidently had some special experience that has made you embittered against religion. We have a few minutes together yet. Can we not talk it out?' For a moment he was silent, and there was a look in his eyes that made me sorry for him. Then he asked, 'Are you married?' I answered, 'Yes.' 'Have you any children?' I said, 'No.'

"Then in a bitter way he told me his story.

'Five years ago,' he said, 'I married the best girl in all the world to me. Two years later a little boy came to us. It cost my little girl her life. I was almost crushed, but I had the baby boy. Then six weeks afterwards he, too, went. Both my wife and I attended church before and after we were married, and lived good, straight lives, and I know she died what you people would call a Christian. But look here, my friend, it is no use preaching a God of Love to me, because there isn't any. From then until now I have had nothing to do with religion. All I know is that my wife and child are gone forever.'

"I offered a silent prayer for direction, and then I said, with all the kindness I could put in my voice, 'I am very sorry, and deeply sympathize with you. But might I suggest that your heavy sorrow has blinded your higher and better feelings a little? You tell me your wife died a Christian, and for you that should be the brightest and most precious thing in your memory of her. She, no doubt, died thinking you were also a Christian.' 'Yes,' he said, 'I suppose she did.' 'Well,' I continued, 'I don't think you really believe—and I say it with the sincerest respect—that she died like a dog, and that was the end of everything. Do you?' He did not answer for a minute. Then he said, 'I don't know exactly what to think.' 'Well,' I said, 'I know that it is not so, and so do you. Have you ever thought that you are going

to cut yourself off from her, and from your baby boy, for all eternity, because you cannot understand why God should have taken them from you?' 'No,' he said, 'I had not thought of that.'

"As we were getting close to the city, I had to finish rather abruptly. But I asked him to go to one of the Mission meetings in the Exhibition Building, and attend the men's after-meeting. He did not promise, but said that he might go. I gave him my card, and asked him, as a favour, that if his position towards God and Jesus Christ was changed, and he could believe the words of the hymn *O Friend Without Jesus,* to put the card in an envelope and post it back to me. I said, 'Do not send it unless you mean it, but I shall be glad to know.' Since that day I prayed for him, and to my great joy, a few days ago, I received the card, crumpled, but nevertheless *the same card.*"

And so one could go on—to fill this volume. A word must, however, be said for some of Mr. Alexander's later songs. Chief among those he taught people to love during the past five or six years must be placed *Out of the Ivory Palaces,* written by Henry Barraclough, a talented young English musician, who succeeded Robert Harkness as Mr. Alexander's chief accompanist. This beautiful production was written by Mr. Barraclough after hearing Dr. Chapman preaching from the text: "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes,

and cassia, out of the ivory palaces. . . ." (Ps. 45: 8). Sung as a duet, the hymn became extremely popular, and certainly ranks as one of the most distinctive and original numbers Mr. Alexander ever used in his ministry of sacred song.

Then there is *Back to My Father and Home; Have Thine Own Way, Lord,* and *Just a Little Help From You* (all three from the pen of one of the finest of all the Gospel hymn-writers America has yet produced—George C. Stebbins); *O Glorious Day* (words written by Dr. Wilbur Chapman); *Jesus is a Friend of Mine* and *Grace that is Greater Than All Our Sin,* both written by the late Dr. D. B. Towner. I think the former of these two last-named hymns was an especial favourite with Mr. Alexander, for I never heard him conduct a single song service, in later days, without his having it sung. And if a place be permitted for a personal preference, I want to make it for the last-named, as being my own especial favourite of all the famous Alexander Hymns. It is a saddening reflection that the man who made these beautiful words and melodies so helpful and dear to hundreds of thousands of his fellows will be seen and heard on earth no more—a reflection which can *only* be brightened at all by the thought that he has been translated to joyfully participate in singing

Songs ever new, though the ages grow old.

IV

AT NORTHFIELD

DURING the period of the World War Mr. Alexander was, for two or three years in succession, the outstanding figure at the East Northfield General Christian Workers' Conference. I saw a good deal of him about this time, and for one man, at least, East Northfield and Charles Alexander will always remain inseparably associated.

For me, as I believe, for hundreds of other people, there is no place just like Northfield. About the whole countryside there is something astonishingly fragrant—something that subtly affects the soul; something that is provocative of high resolves and clarified aspirations; something, moreover, that is hemmed in, and around, by lingering and hallowed memories of the sainted dead, who, "in the gray days gone," served and worshipped God amid its sylvan scenes of beauty and peace.

After an absence of a year, I always feel the combined appeal of its natural beauty and spiritual incentive descend upon me with extraordinary newness. One just allows the place and its memo-

ries to take him, to do with him what it listeth, to once more give him a glimpse of the life with morning face and clear, unfaltering eyes.

At Northfield, the complexities of existence appear to be suddenly simplified, and one is made conscious of a great inrush of physical and mental peace which does *not*—thank God!—pass all human understanding.

With this sense of tranquillity comes, too, an air of delicious freedom. The glamour of the place does not seize one in a clutch of tenacious sanctity. At times it would seem to do little more than just leave one alone—to influence him by simply being wonderful, beautiful, unself-consciously sacred. Like the twilight of a windless evening, it purifies, vouchsafing lessons of simplicity, calmness and endurance, enabling one to taste something of the real *joie de vive.*

No; there is no denying the magnetic spell this gathering-place of God's people in the heart of New England can fling over minds and souls rendered susceptible to spiritual influences. At all hours of the day I have felt it laid upon me: In the pearly gray of the dawn; as the surrounding hills lifted themselves drowsily out of the mists of morning; amid the golden glory of meridian splendour; when the western sky was aflame with a fiery sunset; in the fast-falling twilight; as the dust of

little stars began to bespangle the deep azure of the skies, with all the wonder of their shining; 'neath the witcheries of a silver summer moon; while the music of the night-winds, stirring softly in the towering pine-tops, chanted a haunting requiem for the dying of the day. In all these changing phases of faultless summer-time, the spell of Northfield has been laid upon me, bringing God strangely and strongly near.

The very buildings that stud the seminary campus form a sort of sign-manual of things that endure—calm, without a touch of coldness; strong, without a trace of hardness. Set in a harmony of gray and green, of stone and verdure, they wear that simple dignity which, try as it may, the human mind can only associate with old, well-tried beliefs, such as are not moved, because they rest on foundations that are eternal. They are the outward symbols of a great man's faith, and of hearts entrained by God's good grace to maintain and perpetuate the work of his hands, and to see to it that the fruit of his prayers and labours "shall not perish from the earth."

It was into this peculiarly rich and congenial setting that Mr. Alexander's equally peculiar and congenial gifts were projected during the days when the red maw of war clutched grippingly about the throat of the world. All who were present, and remain alive to testify to the fact, know how this

one man's ministry contributed to the success of the Conference. I have introduced Mr. Alexander's association with Northfield during the War period for several reasons—all more or less personal. For many years past, my friends have been making annual pilgrimages to Northfield, always to return loudly sounding its praises. Down to the year 1915, however, opportunity had never served me to similarly favourable ends. But in the summer of that year I attended the General Conference for the first time. Nothing need be said here concerning the poignancy of first impressions further than the bare statement that mine of Northfield—coloured and deepened as they were by certain immediately personal circumstances, such as can be given no record here—will last, probably, as long as I am able to retain memories of any sort of earthly happenings. And that year Mr. Alexander had charge of the song services at Northfield, for the first time in quite a number of years.

For the "platform" of the famous New England gathering, those war-years were pretty lean ones. English preachers, always conspicuous in its list of speakers, were, of course, not available; while, for a variety of reasons, "native talent" of the approved Northfield quality and variety, was not easily obtainable. And all who were present at the General Conferences, and who remain to recall the experience, know how splendidly Alex-

ander's peculiar gifts and ministry contributed to the success of the meetings. Upon hundreds of people he made new and indelible impressions, while, for many others, he rendered memories of Northfield—always precious and fragrant—richly and doubly dear.

The services of which Mr. Alexander had charge were the first I had seen him conduct alone—that is, without his being joined up to some other famous evangelist, and they proved a positive revelation of versatility, artistry, fervour and reverence. They were not just some species of *Gesang Verein* —singing-meetings in which religiously inclined people might foregather to sit (as the old Methodist hymn has it) "and sing themselves away, to everlasting bliss." Not by any means. Right throughout, they were charged with lofty, spiritual incentive, combined in by song, testimony, prayer, definite, pointed evangelistic appeals, over all of which brooded a tangible, spiritual atmosphere. And their gracious influences were continued long after the meetings were over, in acts of fellowship and service. They enabled hundreds of Christian men and women to soar a step higher; to see the things of the soul with a wider, clearer vision; to return to their respective spheres of activity fortified by a new determination to make something richer, stronger, finer out of life and resolved to battle more valiantly than heretofore with the periodical staleness and *ennui* which ever and anon

waylay even the most consecrated of God's children. A Christian experience lacking sunshine, brightness, melody, is, in reality, no experience at all. And it is employing no hyperbole to assert that towards the attainment and perpetuation of "sunshine in the soul," "Charlie" Alexander's song services at East Northfield invariably and inevitably tended. I have been privileged to see and hear "Charlie" many times subsequent to the date of the meetings I have just been describing. But (as it seems to me) never since that time have I felt myself quite so acutely conscious of the unique contribution his manifold gifts made to the men and women who came within the radius of his sunny ministry during those dark and terrible days. For dark and terrible they were for most of us—days whose every dawn brought chilling, numbing apprehension, whose every sun went down in blood and tears. And into them this man came, cheery, buoyant, bearer of a message for wounded hearts and lacerated souls. In such a spirit, and at such a time, I always want to remember Charles Alexander,—a minstrel singing blithely to his fellow-pilgrims as they journeyed onward in the darkness towards the love and light of the coming dawn.

V

THE POCKET TESTAMENT LEAGUE

CHARLES ALEXANDER'S crowning glory was his intense and lifelong love for God's Holy Word. In later years, this love developed into a veritable passion. Everywhere he went, everywhere he worked, saw him urging, with a consuming earnestness, both crowds and individuals to saturate themselves with a knowledge of the Living Word. And, in all probability, this particular phase of his life-work will prove to be his lasting memorial. In the very nature of things, much of his other work, wonderful as it was, had to be of an intensely personal and ephemeral order. It is not possible, for instance, to convey anything approaching an adequate impression of the magnetic spell he could cast over a vast audience, to any man or woman who never saw or heard him do it. Nor can those who enjoyed no access to his immediate fellowship conceive anything of the wizardry of his personal charm. For such as these, he must remain a picturesque tradition of modern evangelism. But in

the efforts he put forth on behalf of the aims and purposes of the Pocket Testament League, he became known to tens of thousands who never saw him in the flesh, but who, in sheer gratitude for the added blessing a daily companionship and communion with the Holy Scriptures has brought them, will permit their memories to linger in loving recollection about the name of Charles Alexander. For this organization has for its only fundamental that which incarnates and interprets the will of Heaven as it should be known and done throughout the world. And it links together millions of people bound by the tenets of no college of cardinals, no diet of ecclesiastics, no Westminster assembly of divines, no pope, no bench of prelates, no congress, no conference, but only by a universal consciousness of God, and His interpretation through Jesus Christ, as revealed in His Holy Word. To the furtherance of this League, Alexander gave of the best that was in him; and he accomplished a great work which (as I see it) is not destined to pass away.

In common with many another far-reaching movement, the Pocket Testament League was born in a day of small beginnings. As stated in numerous publications put out by the organization, its founder was a young schoolgirl, residing in the city of Birmingham—the capital of the English Midlands. When only twelve years of age, this

little girl pledged herself, and her future years, to the service of Jesus Christ. Speedily, she became possessed by the desire to lead her schoolfellows to the Saviour she, herself, had found. She discovered, moreover, that the practice of carrying a pocket Testament, not only for her own reading in leisure moments, but in order to create and foster an interest in God's Word among her fellow-pupils, to be of inestimable value. Out of this a small society developed, the members forming it agreeing to carry and read a New Testament. The little band of Scripture readers grew steadily, until when, some years later, its founder left the school, it could claim upwards of sixty members.

The little English girl who founded the Pocket Testament League was Helen Cadbury, who, in after years, became Mrs. Charles Alexander. Almost immediately after his marriage to Miss Cadbury, the American song-leader caught a vision of the wonderful, far-reaching possibilities of this Bible-reading circle, not only as a means to be used in reaching thousands of unconverted men and women in the great missions in which he participated, but for the building up and stabilizing Christian believers in faith to which they had already given their adherence. He began at once to utilize the League methods in his evangelistic work. The number of its members increased with extraordinary rapidity, until, within a very short time, scores of thousands of names had been enrolled.

It was during the great Chapman-Alexander Mission held in Philadelphia in 1908, that the Pocket Testament League was formally launched, as a world-wide Bible-reading movement. The record of its wonderful, uninterrupted success in Great Britain, Australia, Canada, Japan, China, Korea, Norway, Syria, as well as in every corner of the United States, constitutes one of the most picturesque and romantic chapters in the story of modern evangelism.

Mrs. Besse McAnlis, who under Mr. Alexander's direction for years past has given herself over with the greatest devotion to the work of the League, says of its character and achievements:

"The Pocket Testament League makes its appeal to the young and old, and is as workable in the Bible Class and Brotherhood as in the Sunday School and Primary Classes. It supplies the need of the aged Christian as fully as it satisfies every requirement of the young convert. It establishes an ideal point of contact between the Christian worker and the unsaved seeker after truth. Its simplicity commends it to All Classes while the fact that there are no fees of any kind is an additional commendation of the movement. All that is necessary is, that those desirous of becoming members should honorably and faithfully fulfil the covenant they set their hands to. The simple conditions of membership as embodied in the League Pledge reads:

POCKET TESTAMENT LEAGUE

MEMBERSHIP CARD

I HEREBY accept membership in the Pocket Testament League by making it the rule of my life to read at least one chapter in the Bible each day, and to carry a Bible or Testament with me wherever I go.

Name.....

Date.....

"The fact that the League is a movement with a specific object in view makes the pledge imperative. The pledge, which membership involves, might be termed a governing principle rather than an unbreakable law, exacting that one should never, under any circumstances, miss a day. All that is required is an honest endeavour to make it the rule of one's life to read and carry God's Word.

"Of course there are those who take exception to the pledge, but objections were made to be overcome. For instance, one meets the man who cannot join because he has no room in his pockets for a Testament. When it is pointed out that the average man has, as a general thing, about fourteen pockets in his clothes, it is, after all, not a very great difficulty for him to find room in one of these

for a small copy of the New Testament. Ladies overcome the difficulty by either carrying a Testament in their hand-bags, or improvising a special 'patch pocket' for the purpose.

"The Pocket Testament League does not conflict with any existing Society which has for its objects the study and propagation of God's Word. On the contrary, it is found to increase the efficiency of any such organization, the mere fact of carrying a Testament enabling every spare moment to be utilized for reading and meditation.

"The League gives the Christian more and better opportunities for service. There are many who would do definite Christian work if they knew just what to do. To such the League opens up at once a direct avenue, simple and yet effective, whereby they may do their part in extending the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. In fact, the League's plan of operation is so very simple that all may take advantage of the opportunities to promote it, and by this means bring the Bible with its many messages of hope and comfort, and its wonderful transforming power, close to the life of each person secured as a member of the League. It enables the soul-winner to have God's Word always at hand and heart when dealing with the unsaved. Indeed there is hardly any limit to the possibilities for good offered by the League. It creates and maintains spiritual revival on every hand. Branches of the League are to be found in al-

most every conceivable community and in all denominations. Especially flourishing branches existent in thousands of Sunday Schools, Young People's Societies, Y. W. and Y. M. C. A.'s. Ardent members may be found witnessing for Christ in the offices, schools, factories, colleges, homes, among policemen, firemen, street carmen, soldiers in camps and barracks, sailors on the spreading main."

One comes across ardent and enthusiastic workers of the League everywhere. Mr. Alexander infused scores of young men and women with something of his own zeal for the work. I know, personally, of one instance in the city of New York. Miss Elizabeth Wyburn, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John H. Wyburn of the Jerry McAuley Mission, has, in a quiet, unostentatious fashion, "signed up" upwards of thirteen hundred members of the League—a splendid record for a girl not yet twenty years of age!

During the Great War, the Pocket Testament League was blessed of God in extraordinary fashion. During the five years of the conflict, about one million British and American soldiers joined the League and received Testaments. At one period membership cards of the League were being received from the camps, etc., at the rate of 1,000 per day. Thousands of these men also signified their definite acceptance of Christ as their personal Saviour.

Equally wonderful work was accomplished among the American forces. Everywhere, the men showed an eager disposition to become members of the League, and thousands of Testaments were distributed in the U. S. camps and navy yards. The League worked in closest harmony with the Chaplains and the Y. M. C. A. for the salvation and growth in grace of the soldiers and sailors of the Republic. Testaments were given to the soldiers who joined the League, many of whom made a decision for Christ, and when the war was over went back to civil life, carrying their Testament and their resolves with them. And what shall be said of the gallant lads who were called up to make the great sacrifice? Only this need be said. Thousands were members of the League, and carried with them into that last, grim "rendezvous with Death," the little League edition of the story of the World's Greatest Sacrifice, who "came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

In his highly interesting book, *The Meaning of the War for Religious Education,* wherein he recounts some of his experiences as a Y. M. C. A. worker with the American Expeditionary Force, Dr. Robert Wells Veach, of Philadelphia, pays the following high tribute—a tribute not without a touch of humour—to the work of the League among the boys at the front:

"There are some people who are just a bit cynical as to the real place which the Pocket Testament League played in the lives of the soldiers. On the whole, it was far larger than we are inclined to think, as the following incidents would seem to indicate:

"'What have you done with your Pocket Testament, Buddy?' I asked one day of a bright, clean-cut lad whom I had come to know very intimately. 'On the level, now, what have you done with it?'

"A faint flush spread over his face, his eyes dropped for an instant, then looking straight at me he replied:

"'I don't mind telling *you*. I got hard up for cigarette-paper one day, and unable to find any, I used a leaf from my Pocket Testament. It worked so well that I tried another and another. To be perfectly frank with you,' he continued with just a suspicion of sly wit as he glanced around at the other fellows, 'I have smoked my Testament as far as the sixth chapter of Hebrews.'

"The laugh was at my expense. About that there could be no mistake, and it was perfectly plain that the lad's companions were waiting to see how I would recover myself. I confess I was helpless for a moment, then my memory served me well. I recalled a striking sentence in the sixth chapter.

"'I like your frankness, old man,' I said, 'but allow me one favour, won't you? Let me read to

you a verse from the sixth chapter of Hebrews before you smoke it.'

"'That is fair enough,' said one of the group, and he evidently echoed the judgment of all. My friend also consented readily, so I took my own Testament from my pocket and read as follows:

"'For as touching those who once tasted the good word of God and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame. . . . But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you.'

"As I read the last sentence my eyes met his with a smile on my face and a note of interrogation and expectancy in my voice. There was dead silence for a moment. Conflicting emotions struggled within him for expression. They passed across his countenance like shadows flitting on a sunlit wall,—amazement, consternation, pain, repentance, fear, courage, joy. Then he spoke with a courage so characteristic of thousands of our young fellows: 'Leave it to me, mister. I'll never smoke that chapter or any other.'

"It is impossible to estimate accurately the number of soldiers in France who had Pocket Testaments; perhaps one million, three hundred thousand. Several hundred thousand had prayer books or bound portions of the Scripture. Some of these were seldom if ever read, a few were abused; but,

far more than we think, the large majority of them were highly treasured. One day at Nevers word came from the Salvage Office that we could have three boxes of Testaments by sending for them. We sent at once, as we needed them badly. Upon opening the boxes we found not new editions as we had supposed, but three hundred and eighty-five mud-discoloured, blood-stained Testaments from the battle-field of Chateau-Thierry. It seemed to me that I never handled such sacred things. My friend and I could scarcely see through the mist that came into our eyes. We, too, stained many of them with our tears. Numerous passages were underlined, the names of parents and pastors filled the front pages. Three of them bore the marks of Greek letter fraternities. On the inside of the cover of one, deeply stained in blood, I read these words: 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end.'"

Concerning the *general* effectiveness of the Pocket Testament League as an agency for spreading the truth of the Gospel, Charles Gallaudet Trumbull, editor of *The Sunday School Times,* has said:

"The Pocket Testament League is one of the most remarkable evidences, since the days of Pentecost, of the eager desire and unswerving purpose of the Holy Spirit to use the Word of God in evangelizing the world. It seems a safe statement

to make, that no other one movement or plan, since the general circulation of the English Bible commenced in the fourteenth century, has been so blessed of God for soul-winning and the building of Christian character as has the work of the Pocket Testament League.

" Since it was formally launched as a world-wide movement, it has literally swept on its way, blessing thousands upon thousands of souls, saving the lost and deepening and enriching the life of the saved, just because it opens lives to two vital and commonly neglected things: regular feeding on the Word of God, and habitual sharing of this blessing with others.

" Like all the great plans of God, it is simplicity itself. To become a member of the Pocket Testament League you agree to do two things: to read at least one chapter in the Bible each day, and to carry a Testament or a Bible with you wherever you go. An additional feature often follows, though it is not made a part of the pledge: members of the League naturally get into the habit of using God's Word to win the unsaved, and one of the most simple and natural ways of doing this is to secure new members of the League by giving away Pocket Testaments.

" It does seem as though there had never before been suggested a simpler, saner, more richly blessed personal work, open to every man, woman and child in the kingdom who wants to do some-

thing for the Master, than an active membership in the Pocket Testament League. It is such a simple form of service that no one who goes into it is prepared for the stupendous results that follow. When we work with supernatural forces we must expect supernatural results.

"Wherever there are human beings, there the Word of God, as the Sword of the Spirit, can cut deep and sure and savingly. Beggars on the street, porters on the trains, tramcar men, theological students, evangelists, ministers, newspaper men, Sunday-school teachers and pupils, active business men and shut-ins, through the whole gamut of human life, this marvellously simple and miraculously blessed form of service is spreading. It is bound to be so, as surely as the Bible itself meets the need of all mankind."

To the promotion of the work of the Pocket Testament League, Mr. Alexander's last days were specially devoted. He had had laid upon his spirit the vision of a great Bible Revival throughout the entire world. By every means at his disposal he fostered the idea. Meetings were held in various parts of the country; the sympathy and support of prominent Christian laymen were sought and enlisted. So successfully had the work been prosecuted that prior to Mr. Alexander's leaving the United States on what proved to be his last voyage to England, the plans for the specific furtherance of

the Bible Revival had been formulated and passed over into the hands of a responsible committee, whose business and joy it will be to see to it that the projects and ideals of the devoted man, now called to higher service, are carried forward.

A striking endorsement of the value of the work of the Pocket Testament League was accorded it by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, held at Des Moines, Iowa, during the month of May, 1920. This great gathering adopted the following resolution concerning the League:

"This General Conference heartily endorses the Pocket Testament League as an agency of religious education and evangelism. We urge upon all our pastors and personal workers to help recruit this growing army of Bible readers who are helping to swell the current of Christian conversation and create a kingdom climate everywhere."

Dr. George Elliott, elected at this Conference to succeed Dr. William Valentine Kelley as Editor of *The Methodist Review*, moved the adoption of the resolution.

"About four years ago," said Dr. Elliott, "Bishop Henderson signed up a group of ministers and laymen, about thirty or forty of us, in a League called the Pocket Testament League. I began to carry the Testament then wherever I went. I had done it more or less before, but it became a steady

habit. When the war began and our boys went to the front I was able personally to give to the boys myself more than one hundred Pocket Testaments with the pledge inside of it that they would read a portion of it every day. I wish I could spend an afternoon with you some time and read you the letters I got from the front as to their reading of it. From the men who were on the front, somewhere in the Argonne, comes testimony that they came out through that reading into the light and liberty of the Gospel.

"A few weeks ago there came to the city of Detroit [at the time Dr. Elliott made the address he was stationed in this city] Mr. Charles Alexander, the great Gospel singer, to lead in a great evangelistic campaign at the North Woodward Church, and he brought with him this great Bible reading propaganda, and during that campaign 24,000 men and women signed up as members of the Pocket Testament League. You can go into the Chamber of Commerce of Detroit to-day, one of the greatest commercial clubs in America, and you will see men who will get together reading the Pocket Testament, and it will be the means of starting a religious conversation. Every one of us has fourteen pockets at least; one of them ought to be dedicated to Almighty God, and to have a consecrated pocket to hold the Testament, you will have to consecrate another pocket to hold the purse.

"A few weeks ago in an evangelistic meeting in Detroit I made the appeal and there came to the altar twelve Boy Scouts in uniform, and at that altar every one accepted Jesus Christ and we put a Testament in their pockets and they pledged to read it every day. The other day one of these boys came to me—a high-school boy who is getting just beyond the Scout age, but who still is of the bunch—and he told me he believed the Lord had called him to the Christian ministry. I move the adoption of this resolution. And more than its adoption, I believe that it will be the means of constant evangelism wherever it goes."

Dr. George Bickley, then of Philadelphia, but now Bishop Bickley, added this word of commendation and support:

"There is a phase of the work in connection with the Pocket Testament League that should be brought to the attention of the laymen of the General Conference. I have the honour in the city of Philadelphia to be an associate member of the Council of the Pocket Testament League. Since the war has closed this group of laymen are going into industrial establishments and holding meetings during the noon hour, inviting men to sign the pledge of the Pocket Testament League; asking them to make an immediate acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Saviour. In one of the great establishments where at least twenty meetings have been held, we have the testimony of the manager of the

great Budd establishment in the city of Philadelphia that it has revolutionized many of the departments there; that before men who had spent their time in profanity or in playing cards during the noon hour are now gathered together and some one is appointed as leader and they are reading the New Testament, and the men are having Bible classes organized in industrial establishments.

"This was done, for instance, in the city of Coatesville, a manufacturing town of about 15,000 people. One of the great laymen there, Mr. Charles L. Huston, said that he would underwrite the cost. Every family was canvassed and every man was solicited to join the League and that he should read a portion of the Testament every day. And in that city five thousand copies of the Testament were distributed and pledges received. I am taking the time of the General Conference to say these things because I believe it is well worth while in every one of our large cities for a group of our Christian laymen to get together and organize this work and arrange to hold evangelistic services of this kind in industrial establishments, and to put the Word of God into the hands of men that they might read it and find the way to life and peace."

Then the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., held at Philadelphia, May, 1920, passed the following resolution: "The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. heartily endorses the Pocket Testament

League as an agency of evangelism and religious education, and special attention is called to the work which is being done in America's factories and mills by the Business Men's Council of the Pocket Testament League by placing the Word of God in the hands of our toilers and winning them for the Master. The only solution for the world troubles is the religion of Jesus Christ as revealed in His Word."

Still further testimony of the recognition of the work of the Pocket Testament League is everywhere receiving comes from the Far West. Something more than a year ago the Pocket Testament League was made an official part of the practical work program of the Los Angeles Bible Institute. In the report recently issued by the Institute showing the number of conversions brought about by each department during the past year, the Pocket Testament League leads all the others, with over sixteen hundred decisions for Christ wrought through this agency.

It is quite impossible to overestimate what the Pocket Testament League owes to Charles Alexander as well as to his great colleague, Wilbur Chapman. Both men are gone, leaving (as it seems to me) no adequate successors. But it has to be remembered that while "God buries His workmen, He carries on His work," and those to whom has been entrusted the responsibility of this great Movement, can thank God for the example

and the inspiration of the lives laid down, and go forward in the pathway of consecrated service, believing that the blessing of the past is but a foretaste of the greater blessing to come, and made the surer of realization by reason of the labours of those who, "through faith and patience, now inherit the promises." The Word of the Lord standeth sure, and in spreading its use throughout almost the whole world these two consecrated men did, possibly, as much as any two men of their time and generation to bring to those who sat in darkness the radiance of a great light, and a knowledge of the truth of the Gospel as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

VI

THE MAN AS I SAW HIM

IN this final chapter, I desire to set down my own personal impressions of a man who, to a degree far beyond what I deemed my capacity for the practice and exercise of such virtues, held securely my affection and regard. "Charlie" Alexander had his shortcomings. That, of course. But he had fewer than most men, and—here's the crux of the whole matter: If a man do fine, laudable work in the Master's service, appraise him from, and by *that.* And "Charlie" Alexander did enough splendid work in his comparatively short life to make one forget every single limitation of the flesh he ever displayed.

During the seventeen years I knew him I was never able to detect any perceptible change in him. One could meet him after the interval of a year, or that of a day—it was all the same. He was just "Charlie" Alexander, with pulsing heart, hearty voice and winning smile.

He possessed the art of making people talk about themselves—without sophistry or veneer.

He could ask the most direct question without raising a ripple of resentment. And it was due in no small measure to his amazing frankness and his unerring knowledge of human nature, that he could do almost anything he pleased with a single individual, a company of ten or an audience of ten thousand. Who but he could scold a vast throng into singing their heads off, or persuade a timid child to face a sea of strange faces and sing a trembling, little solo?

He was the finest master of appropriate gesture I ever saw. At times I imagined him as being entirely unconscious of how wonderfully well he did this part of his work. In watching him, I was, more than once, reminded of the reply made by a well-known artist to a lady who had asked him how she should arrange the furniture in her drawing-room?

"Don't arrange it at all, madam," he replied, "just let it *occur*."

I am quite sure that he realized that the essential thing about gesture is that it should *mean* something. Never, so far as I could discover, was he ever obsessed by the illusion that he was supposed to wave his hands about aimlessly, simply because they happened to exist at the end of his arms, like two flags, and that something or other had to be done with them. He seemed always impelled by the desire that

his message should be *felt,* and regarded his gestures as what one might call the ornaments of delivery.

I never suspected him of being a student of dramatic or histrionic art. In spite of the picturesque, the inimitable, way he went about his work, one felt that with him it was, after all, a plain business. He was not playing a part, or acting a piece. He was presenting a case. And present it he did, at once sincerely and uniquely. Alexander was a perpetual fulfilment of Shakespeare's famous injunction:

This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

I believe, furthermore, that with the great Apostle, Mr. Alexander never failed to realize that the aim, burden, and purpose of his ministry was to "persuade men." He had something to say to them, something to sing to them, something that made them ashamed of the sort of life they were living, and wishful to seek grace to abandon it for a better one. He saw every man, every woman, as the object of the strife of two worlds, and strove to fling his own personality into that end of the scale which held the divine influences, so that the final decision might be for eternal life.

He laboured, too, to keep men "sunny." He

had caught something of the spirit which possessed that great-souled preacher, the late Charles Silvester Horne. A well-known English novelist once congratulated Horne on, as he was condescending enough to say, brightening up Tottenham Court Road.

"Your evening service," said the novelist, "is almost as interesting as a theatre."

"Sir," replied Horne, "if I could not make my evening service very much *more* interesting than any theatre in London, I would not hold it at all!"

Charles Alexander possessed an unfailing fund of genuine, legitimate humour. Like some of the great princes of the English pulpit—Spurgeon, Parker, Maclaren—he was never afraid of rippling faces into smiles. Yet none save the preternaturally solemn—people who confuse dullness with decorum—were ever shocked, or even annoyed, at what he said or did. Nor could the most precise in his audiences ever charge him with mere buffoonery, or the lending of himself to common, vulgar quips or vaudevillian antics. With keener insight than most, whose vocation it is to proclaim the Good News, either by sermon or song, Alexander realized that a touch of wholesome humour spelled humanity in the messenger, an intellectual sanity, a sense of proportion; that it meant (or

should mean) that he knows he is on the winning side—proclaiming the Gospel of One who can never suffer defeat.

Everywhere he ministered, he did something to remove the impression, all too commonly created and held, that the followers of Jesus Christ are a folk few and feeble, struggling on lugubriously against overwhelming difficulties. He contrived to get something of the old Hebrew Psalmist's sense of "joy and gladness" into all his service for his Master, and came to regard and utilize humour as a means of grace. And why not? Why let the devil have all the humour, as General Booth said he had the songs?

Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?

Whenever and wherever I saw him at work, Alexander seemed to be ever striving to get at the inside of people's minds, in order that he could help them, and by means and lines along which they were most accessible. He possessed, in his way, the principles of splendid opportunism. He knew, as well as any man of his time, that the Gospel of Christ is susceptible of infinite adaptations to every variety of the human mind. Of course, when he told it to little children (and I have seen him handle large groups in simply faultless fashion), he did not present it by the same methods, or in the same language, as when facing great

audiences of grown, and largely critical minds. And yet, to all intents and purposes, he was always the same. He realized that to the child and the mature thinker (when the latter is sincere as the former *always* is) that in its essence the Gospel is exactly alike. I do not know whether he knew of that saying of John Ruskin, who once declared that "what a little child cannot understand of Christianity nobody else need try to," but he acted as if he did, and achieved great results accordingly.

And right to the end, "Charlie" Alexander, himself, remained a sort of fascinating, happy child. Do not, I pray you, misunderstand me. He was never child*ish*, but child*like*. He seemed to look out on life with a child's simplicity and singleness of eye, but with a grown man's shrewd understanding. This rare combination formed no small part of the powers he exercised over all who knew him, or who came under the spell of his wonderful personality. Everybody loved him. If he had sojourned in hell itself the devils themselves would have loved him, and, thereby, he would have turned it into a very heaven while he stayed.

But the abode of the ransomed—the blood-washed—was his own place, and he went to it, at the last, with the same unaffected delight that he went to any new and joyous scene of worship and service on earth. Beyond any shadow or scintilla of a doubt, Charles Alexander has entered into the joy of his Lord.

As one thinks of his passing, he cannot fail of being reminded of the fact that nothing is so definitely asserted in the New Testament as the sublime promise of Heaven. There is little enough about immortality (it takes that for granted), but it has much to say about that Blessed Home of the Soul, sweetly associated with so many of Alexander's famous Gospel songs.

"To die is gain"—that is the Christian message, an asseveration of great joy. The things of the world—ills, sorrows, losses, defeats—are as nothing to the glory that awaits the believer. These drop off as a dream that is gone—unremembered when the sun is risen.

"When by His grace, I shall look on His face—
That will be glory—be glory for me."

In the glowing poetry of the Book of Revelation, the fact of victory, reward, increased joy, crowning, stands out on almost every page. The Christian becomes a ruler with God; he has the morning stars in his hand, jewels upon his breast, God's Name on his forehead. He walks golden streets surrounded by walls of jasper which are entered through gates of pearl. All this beautiful imagery is but John's way of saying that the Christian's death means gain, enrichment, enlargement, the passing from a lesser to a greater glory. Into this eternal heritage, Charles Alexander, our "brother beloved," has passed gloriously, to go no more out